

STAAR Evidence Digest

Curated by the STAAR Technical Senior Leadership Team

Issue 13 | January 2024



Hello and welcome to the STAAR Evidence Digest for January 2024

The STAAR Digest is a round-up of news, evidence and opinion related to both social protection in crises and gender-responsive social protection. Plus updates on STAAR's own work. We aim to publish the Digest each month.

STAAR's Technical Senior Leadership team has structured the Digest around themes which relate closely to our work on STAAR. The content is by no means exhaustive.

Any feedback on the content, format, etc is welcome.

Email us at STAAR@STAARfacility.org

Social Protection in conflict settings

- » **IRC published a paper in October 2023 on The New Geography of Extreme Poverty: How the World Bank Can Deliver for Communities Impacted by Conflict**. It does not include examples from social protection but provides recommendations to the World Bank on how to partner more and better with non-sovereign actors in countries impacted by conflict.
 - Conflict-affected countries are furthest behind on the SDGs, scoring an average of just 49.7 out of 100 (representing full SDG achievement), behind the global average of 67.2. Of the 10 countries that have made the least progress on achieving the SDGs, eight are conflict-affected LDCs.
 - Their average score is 55.8 on the 2021/2022 Women, Peace and Security Index, which measures women's inclusion, security and access to justice, with eight conflict-affected LDCs featuring among the bottom 20 performers. Gender inequality compounds the impact of conflict and fragility on women and girls, who face heightened risks of gender-based violence (GBV), are disproportionately impacted by limited health care, and face additional barriers to accessing education and economic empowerment.
 - IRC recommends a tripling of IDA by 2030 and then goes into detail on **how this additional money can be spent in conflict-affected countries by the Bank engaging more in “People-centered partnerships”**: Overcoming conflict-related risks and challenges through diverse partnerships in delivery, risk assessment and mapping. They identify four models of partnership: Advisory Model, Technical Support Model, Hybrid Implementation Model and Direct Financing Model.
 - All these partnership models could be used for maintaining and strengthening SP in conflict-affected settings too, and some of them have been used already. The paper provides examples from other sectors but could have used SP examples such as the PSNP in Ethiopia.
 - The distinction between different partnership models is really useful and in line with STAAR's thinking on using a separation of functions framework to identify which organisations are most suited to delivering which functions of a shock and gender-responsive social protection system.
- » **STAAR is working on a piece about sustaining and strengthening social protection systems in conflict**. This work is seeking to capture learning on challenges, promising practices and policy implications for better supporting social protection during conflict. It is being undertaken in partnership with UNICEF and WFP.
 - The study aims to collate available experiences and learning on maintaining, adapting, and building and strengthening social assistance in contexts that are affected by conflict, focusing on key challenges and opportunities (including political, financial, programme and operational aspects and considering risk appetite).
 - The study also aims to develop a set of around seven concise case studies documenting country experiences with building, maintaining, adapting, and strengthening social assistance in conflict

contexts. A final output of the assignment will be a synthesis note for practitioners and policymakers, including international actors that make decisions on how social protection in conflict is funded and delivered (notably FCDO, Germany, EU, USAID and the World Bank). This will articulate key issues and challenges and highlight emerging promising practices, guiding principles and key considerations and recommendations to guide future efforts to build, maintain, adapt, and strengthen social assistance in conflict contexts.

- The assignment will be structured in two phases: Phase 1 (December 2023-April 2024) will focus on sustaining social protection following rapid onset conflict and Phase 2 (April – September 2024) on supporting systems/strengthening of social protection in protracted crises. Results will be disseminated through a round table event.
- Case study countries agreed include Yemen, Sudan, Sahel (regional), Ethiopia and Ukraine. Other possible countries include Afghanistan, Nigeria, Armenia and Somalia.

- » **The World Bank and the World Food Programme are deepening their partnership to scale up impact on food security.** The [read-out from a high-level meeting](#) on 11 December in Rome says that the partnership will ‘have a particular focus on addressing the interconnected challenges of food insecurity, climate change, fragility, and poverty. Leveraging the distinct comparative advantages of the two institutions, the partnership will aim to improve programmatic alignment, anchored in data and knowledge sharing, with a sharp focus on strengthening the capacities of institutions in the poorest and most vulnerable countries.



ROADMAP FOR ENGAGEMENT ON SOCIAL PROTECTION IN SOUTH SUDAN

South Sudan is the world’s youngest country and the world’s third most fragile state. In response, the government of South Sudan’s National Social Protection Policy Framework has outlined a role for all levels of government with the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, to plan and coordinate social protection.

However, a lack of budget allocation, an implementation plan for the framework and capacity issues within the ministry have hindered the development of a government-executed social protection system.

This study supported FCDO South Sudan in the design of the social protection elements of humanitarian and resilience business cases, which ultimately offered a longer-term roadmap for engagement in social protection, beyond the work supported by bilateral programming.

FCDO’s South Sudan Country Plan goal is to support South Sudan’s stabilisation; including no return to nationwide conflict; reduced violence; food insecurity and poverty; and increased resilience to shocks and stresses, actively led by the government.

This study utilised both qualitative and quantitative data through a three-month desk-based review and gathered new evidence from key informant interviews with UNICEF, UNOPS and the World Bank.

The assignment provided a principle and process-oriented approach to support decision-making and engagement with key actors on social protection, through a report which summarises the findings from the STAAR team in South Sudan. Notably, the findings highlight 24 recommendations comprising areas on specific project strategy; government leadership; public/private coordination; operational coordination; links between humanitarianism and social protection; the role of FCDO and design recommendations for the Humanitarian and Resilience business case.

Value for Money of digital cash in fragile settings

- » **Astounding results come from a paper by four academics on digital aid in Afghanistan:** [Can Digital Aid Deliver During Humanitarian Crises?](#)
 - Not only is the cost of delivery under 7 cents per dollar, which is 10 cents per dollar less than the WFP’s global figure for cash-based humanitarian assistance. But the transfers to mostly tech-illiterate, female-headed households also led to high usage rates, no diversion by the Taliban and

that 80% of recipient preferred digital aid rather than pay a 2.5% fee to receive aid in cash. The aid led to significant improvements in nutrition and mental well-being.

- Asked to predict the findings, policymakers and experts underestimated beneficiaries' ability to use digital transfers and overestimated the likelihood of diversion and the costs of delivery. Such misperceptions might impede the adoption of new technologies during crises. These results highlight the potential for digital aid to complement existing approaches in supporting vulnerable populations during crises.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

- » **Can social protection support transformative changes in the lives of women and girls?** Two papers explore this from different perspectives –
 - Gavrilovic et al., (2023) provides evidence and orientation for future policy, research and programmatic work on how to adopt a gender transformative approach (GTA) to social protection to achieve sustainable results in rural poverty reduction, food security and nutrition. The [paper](#) argues that there is increasing demand to understand how social protection interventions can address social and gender norms and power dynamics at the household level and beyond.
 - Another paper (Markus and Somji, 2024), published by ALIGN, provides insights into successful approaches to shift the social norms that drive economic inequalities at community, workplace and policy levels, including in labour force participation, control assets, finances and access to financial services. The [paper](#) highlights what key mechanisms can shift gender norms to realise women's economic rights and promote women's economic empowerment through direct approaches that seek to change mindsets and indirect approaches that seek to change the conditions, systems and structures that underpin a norm
- » **Two recent [papers](#) explore the important linkages between climate, gender and social protection.** Adeyeye and Fischer (2023) provide a review of the literature on social protection, gender and climate resilience in the Sahel. Using the [Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection](#) framework, the review assesses existing knowledge and gaps in the linkages between social protection, gender and climate resilience across six gender equality outcomes indicators: economic security and empowerment, voice and agency, protection, health (including mental), education and psychosocial well-being lens.
- » **A recent [paper](#) from IFPRI (Hirvonen et al., 2023) asks if ultra-poor graduation programmes build resilience against droughts.** Using evidence from rural Ethiopia, the paper shows that the PSNP has moderating effects on the negative impacts of droughts on households, with important gender dimensions. The research finds that the PSNP mitigates adverse outcomes for women in relation to diet, nutrition, and IPV.
- » **In addition, a new [GADN briefing](#) highlights the importance of the provision of quality care services.** Drawing on research conducted by Global South organisations including in Brazil, India and Zambia, it highlights the cost-effectiveness, sustainability, and equity of publicly financed care services and social protection as central to achieving gender equality and women's rights.
- » **STAAR has just published two papers summarising the findings of a rapid mapping exercise on gender data.**
 - [Mapping gender and social protection data](#) is designed to understand the ongoing efforts of global development agencies in gathering and analysing sex-disaggregated data in social protection. The report explores the reach and benefits of gender-responsive and transformative social protection systems for women and girls, emphasising the importance of quality gender statistics. It also investigates institutional participation in disaggregated data, highlighting reporting gaps and identifying opportunities to enhance gender-responsive data management.
 - [Integrating gender into household surveys: Recommendations for National Statistics Offices](#) brief proposes recommendations for integrating gender into household surveys for National Statistics Offices. The brief consider how to adapt existing data collection tools and processes focusing on household surveys, to encourage the expansion of resources to address gaps and improve the gender responsiveness of social protection systems.



GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE DESIGN OPTIONS FOR MWCD FOR NATIONAL FLAGSHIP SCHEME ON GIRL CHILD AND CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMMES FOR ENDING CHILD MARRIAGES AND FOR EMPOWERMENT

The Government of India and UNICEF have collaborated to build a transformative gender agenda, that can accelerate the improvement of outcomes for girls. As part of this agenda, social protection programmes have come into existence at both national and subnational levels.

At the national level, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) programme is the Indian government's flagship campaign which was launched in January 2015 under the National Mission for Empowerment of Women. The BBBP programme aims to prevent gender-based sex-selective elimination; ensure survival and protection of girls and provide adequate education and social participation opportunities.

At the subnational level, there are several cash transfer schemes supported by state governments. The subnational schemes have focussed on improving the sex ratio at birth, education outcomes and ending child marriages. The results have indicated a positive influence on parents' investing in the education of girls. However, inconsistencies across states and districts concerning improving the sex ratio at birth and ending child marriage persist.

In response, UNICEF India and the Institute for Human Development (IHD) have partnered to undertake a multi-state review of state-specific cash transfer schemes.

This study involves the provision of technical assistance to the IHD, under the guidance of UNICEF, the national Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and state governments. It will review both the National flagship scheme on the girl child 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' (BBBP) and Eight State-specific cash transfer schemes for preventing child marriage, which are supported by UNICEF through a cash-plus approach.

The review is still ongoing but intends to communicate effectively and efficiently with policy implications and recommendations of the research to state governments, through the drafting of state-specific policy briefs.

This document was developed as part of the STAAR -Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice and Resources facility implemented by DAI Global UK Ltd and funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The views expressed in this document are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent FCDO's own views or policies.

© 2023

Copyright in the typographical arrangement and design (of this publication) is jointly owned by the Crown in the right of the United Kingdom. This publication (excluding the logos) may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium, provided that it is reproduced accurately (in full or in part) and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright with the title and source of the publication specified.

Published by STAAR, on behalf of FCDO.